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## NAACP elects Roslyn Brock, 44, as youngest board chairman

By Jesse Washington

NEW YORK (AP) - The NAACP elected a health care executive as its youngest board chairman Feb. 20, continuing a youth movement for the nation's oldest civil rights organization.

Roslyn M. Brock, 44, was chosen to succeed Julian Bond. She had been vice chairman since 2001 and a member of the NAACP for 25 years.

Brock works for Bon Secours Health Systems in Maryland as vice president for advocacy and government relations, and spent 10 years working on health issues for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. She joins Benjamin Todd Jealous, the 37-year-old CEO of the NAACP, as leader of the 500,000-member organization.

Brock said she plans to focus on pushing for policy changes to eliminate inequality, strengthening the relationship between the national and local NAACP branches and holding people accountable.

"It's not always what someone is doing to us, but what we are doing for ourselves," Brock said in an interview.

The departure of Bond, 70, after 10 years as board chairman marks a turning point for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Bond came of age in the segregated South, helped found the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and was on the front lines of the protests that led to the nation's landmark civil rights laws. He is a symbol and icon of "the movement," which was a defining experience for older generations.

In recent years the NAACP has endured criticism that it is old and out of touch. Then Bond brought in Jealous, then 34, as the NAACP's youngest CEO, and endorsed Brock's bid for board chairman.

The selection of young leaders "is deliberate, but it's also fortuitous," Bond said. "We are lucky to have had this confluence of a young CEO and a young chair. I don't think we plotted and planned that in 2010 the stars would align this way."

Brock was selected in a vote by the 64-person NAACP board. Her opponent was Rev. Wendell Anthony, leader of the NAACP's Detroit chapter, who withdrew Feb. 19 after he was not re-elected to his seat on the board.

Brock graduated from Virginia Union University and has an MBA from Northwestern, as well as master's degrees in health care administration and divinity.

Many conservatives question the need for an NAACP and say that an association for the advancement of white people would be considered racist.

Brock said the NAACP has erroneously been classified as a black group: "We are not. We are a multiracial, multiethnic organization. So as we move into our second century, our desire is to cast our net broader."

"People of color' or 'colored people' really speaks to those who are falling through the cracks ... who feel locked out," she said.

She said the nation was at a pivotal moment after electing the first black president.

"I'd be the first to say that at the NAACP we have to acknowledge how far we've come as a nation in terms of race relations, but also in that acknowledgment, understanding that we're not where we ought to be, but we thank God we're not what we used to be.

"We need to draw a line in the sand and say thank you, America ... but also challenge America that we still have much more work to do."



MS. ROSYLN M. BROCK, NAACP BOARD CHAIR

## Holder: Path paved by 2nd black solicitor general

By David N. Goodman

DETROIT (AP) - Eric Holder said Feb. 17 he owes his job as the nation's first black attorney general to the path paved by the second African-American to become solicitor general, Wade McCree Jr.

Holder didn't address two high-profile Detroit cases during his speech: the prosecution of "underwear bomb" suspect Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab and his department's probe of the FBI's Oct. 28 fatal shooting of Luqman Abdullah, imam of a Detroit mosque, during a raid.

Holder spoke to about 500 people at the Federal Bar Association's annual social justice award luncheon named for McCree and later attended the installation of Eastern Michigan U.S. Attorney Barbara McQuade.

Holder said he was a "young and idealistic lawyer" in the U.S. Justice Department when President Jimmy Carter named McCree solicitor general, the federal government's chief lawyer in cases before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Holder said when Carter appointed McCree, he was a prosecutor in the Justice Department's Public Integrity Section.

"I was fresh out of law school, a young and idealistic attorney," Holder said, "and Wade McCree embodied the qualities that I, as a young African-American, hoped to emulate as a lawyer."

He said each generation has "people of principle" who have "triumphed over the evils" of their time to "help create a better America."

"Each of us has walked through a doorway of possibility that these leaders pried open," he said. "I have walked through doors opened by Judge McCree and stand on his shoulders. We have a responsibility to ensure that this progress continues."

As solicitor general in 1976-81, McCree argued the 1978 affirmative-action case involving white medical school applicant Allan Bakke, as well as issues over the release of President Richard Nixon's Oval Office tapes.

Before that, McCree was a judge on the U.S. District Court in Detroit and the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati. He taught at the University of Michigan after leaving federal service until his death in 1987.

## Obama-Black Farmers - USDA reaches new settlement with black farmers

By Ben Evans

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Obama administration on Feb. 18 announced a \$1.25 billion deal with black farmers that could end a years-long stalemate over alleged racial discrimination by the Agriculture Department.

If approved by Congress, it would be the second round of damages stemming from a class-action lawsuit the government originally settled in 1999. The new money is intended for people who were denied earlier payments because they missed deadlines for filing. The amount of money each would get depends on how many claims are successfully filed.

### NAACP - Durham Branch

#### Monthly Meeting

February 28:

Covenant Presbyterian Church

2620 E. Weaver St.

Rev. Jimmie Hawkins, Pastor

For more information call 682-4930

President Barack Obama initially called for the \$1.25 billion in his budget last year, but the request stalled in Congress as disagreements persisted over the amount of funding and the structure of the settlement. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said the Feb. 18 agreement should pave the way for congressional approval and get money flowing soon.

In a statement, Obama said the deal would bring "these long-ignored claims of African-American farmers to a rightful conclusion."

"I look forward to a swift resolution to this issue, so that the families affected can move on with their lives," Obama said.

Vilsack said the deal should close a "sordid chapter" in USDA history in which blacks often lost land or went deeply into debt after being denied loans and other aid that routinely went to their white counterparts.

John Boyd, a key plaintiff organizer and head of the National Black Farmers Association, initially balked at the \$1.25 billion last year, saying it would take more money to satisfy all the claims. But he said Feb. 18 that he and others agreed to the total because the case has dragged on for so long.

"Many of the farmers have already died waiting for justice so I thought this was the right thing to do," he said.

The original lawsuit is known as Pigford, named after Timothy Pigford, a black farmer from North Carolina who was among the original plaintiffs. Under the 1999 settlement, the government paid out more than \$1 billion to about 16,000 farmers, mostly from the South.

Most claimants opted for expedited \$50,000 payments that required a relatively low burden of proof. Boyd and others have pushed for another round of damages because thousands of people said they didn't know about the settlement and missed deadlines for filing.

The new agreement calls for a similar process in which claimants can win damages without going to court.

Associate Attorney General Thomas Perrelli said claimants can seek fast-track payments of up to \$50,000 plus debt relief, or choose a longer process for damages of up to \$250,000. Estimates on the number of potential claims vary widely, but some expect about 65,000 - which would set average payments at roughly \$20,000.

The Feb. 18 announcement comes as Boyd and others had become increasingly critical of Obama, arguing that he was paying lip service to the issue and not living up to a campaign promise to fund it. It also represents a shift from the Bush administration, which resisted paying new claims.

Roy Merrick, who tried unsuccessfully in the early 1980s to start a catfish farm on his property in Natchez, Miss., said Feb. 18 he was glad to hear he might get some compensation. He said he could never get USDA officials to pay him much attention when he tried to get a loan - even though many of his white neighbors got federal help to build successful catfish ponds.

"Had I been able to secure money back in those times I might have been able to do more for my family," said Merrick, 67, who instead went into home painting and repairs.

## The costs of the ideological crusade in Wake County Schools

By Chris Fitzsimon N.C. Policy Watch

The damage to Wake County from the efforts of the new resegregationist Gang of Five majority on the board of education became quantifiable Feb. 16, as the taxpayers lost \$15 million and the community lost the dedicated leadership of School Superintendent Del Burns, whose conscience wouldn't let him stay on as the nationally recognized system was dismantled.

Burns announced his resignation at the beginning of Tuesday's (Feb. 16) meeting, a move that startled the board and the audience and prompted Gang of Five Chair Ron Margiotta to call for an immediate recess.

Burns didn't say much in his statement but his point was clear as he cited the direction and the decisions of the board and that he "could not in good conscience continue to serve as superintendent."

Board member Ann McLaurin said Burns' decision was a terrible loss for the schools and the community and told reporters that Burns simply couldn't go along with the Gang of Five's priorities, which include abolishing the system's national recognized diversity policy and returning to resegregated schools.

Margiotta said he hoped the new board's decisions were not the reason Burns is leaving and even said he might try to talk him into staying. Gang of Fiver John Tedesco said he had hoped Burns would stay and "work on

building a new vision for students and education in our community."

But Burns had no interest in a vision even Tedesco now admits will create as many as 20 high-poverty and overwhelmingly segregated schools in a system where no schools are currently failing.

Surely Tedesco and Margiotta can see through their crocodile tears and understand that a man who dedicated 34 years of his life to improving public education would not want to end his career watching the school system he loves fall victim to an ideological crusade.

The leaders of one advocacy group that supports the Gang of Five said "everyone's best interest is served" by Burns' resignation, an odd statement considering that 94.5 percent of the parents who responded to a recent survey said they were satisfied with their child's school.

Maybe it's time to call the new majority the Gang of Five and a Half Percent.

Fittingly, after Burns' resignation, the board displayed its arrogance and poor judgment, voting 5-4 to waste \$15 million of taxpayer money by abandoning the proposed site of a new high school in Northeast Raleigh, which also means hundreds of high school students will spend another two years in trailers while a new site is prepared.

Abandoning the site and all the work to prepare it was a campaign promise of the four Gang of Fivers elected last fall and they blindly stuck with it, despite a recommendation otherwise by a group of 19 experts from the city, county, and state formed to evaluate the proposed site and alternatives suggested by new board members.

The numbers presented by the group's report and the staff of the school system were clear. The current site of the new high school may not be perfect, but it would take \$15 million and at least two more years to build the school somewhere else.

Confronted with the numbers again Feb. 16, the Gang of Five simply refused to believe them, challenging the credibility and at times the integrity of the staff, and chose to plow ahead with a new site anyway.

Ann McLaurin pointed out that \$15 million is a lot of money in a budget crisis when schools can't afford textbooks and teacher assistants.

But that doesn't matter. This is a crusade remember, not a reasoned approach to making the best decisions for Wake County.

That was clearer than ever Tuesday when the people of the county lost not only \$15 million, but something far more important, the steady and dedicated leadership of a superintendent who refused to be part of destroying 30 years of progress.